

AYM Share and Tell on De-militarisation

Tuesday 7th July 2020, 4.30 – 6 p.m. on line

1. Welcome to everyone & Acknowledgment of country
2. Silence
3. Introductions from everyone: name, Meeting, indigenous land, why I signed up for this Share and Tell? Have you all got pencil and paper, to jot down questions, references, suggestions?
4. The topic: COVID 19 provides an opportunity for a global re-think about everything....let's not squander it... a kinder and more compassionate future is possible, linking social justice issues with the climate crisis, and providing ways forward for the good of all species in all spaces, over all time...but rapid response and clarity of goals on a global scale is a big challenge. Arundhati Roy's comment re. chessboard players. Naomi Klein's comment re. protecting privilege. SIPRI's 2019 figures on military expenditure: \$1.8 trillion annually, increasing by roughly 3% per annum. Just imagine what that amount could do to further the Global Sustainable Development goals.... 17 of them. Look at #16: Peace, justice and strong institutions. Many international civil society organisations are calling for more public expenditure on healthcare, not warfare, as we see the richest country in the world unable to provide enough PPE's for its frontline workers. And we see the many countries without a proper health system to fall down, and we must remember millions of people in refugee camps and in prisons where spatial distancing is impossible. And yet, how amazing it is, that when humans lives are at risk, that to a certain degree, we can jump to, and work constructively. Although the pandemic knows no borders we are far from "all in this together" - so many poorer people and people of colour are falling victim to this pandemic, and many are left behind, even in our own very wealthy country..... ON the other hand, as the climate crisis has been unfolding before our eyes, it seems that governments can ignore the seriousness of the situation, and be blind to the effects of the devastation which is imminent, and the damage which we are landing on future generations. All of this is linked together, as Joanna Macy, proponent of the Work that Re-connects says: "our lives extend beyond our skins in radical inter-dependence throughout our

world.” And all of this is linked too, to gross expenditure on weapons and on rehearsals for war, and of course, war itself, which is a huge contributor, not only to human suffering, but environmental degradation and to global greenhouse emissions. The military forces of the world are amongst the largest users of fossil fuels, and of course, tie up so many resources in human and material terms which could be put to better use.

5. What about Australia’s role in all this? Well, sadly, SIPRI lists Australia as #13 on the global index of military expenditure. There are nearly 200 nations on earth – why would we, an island nation, without any “enemies” rate 13th spot? I think we suffer from an insecurity phobia, which might be traced back to non-indigenous settlement of mostly convicts. We will never have peace and justice in this country until we really respect the oldest living culture in the world, and truly listen to their stories. Which is why I reckon we need the “truth-telling” part of the Uluru statement delivered first. We’ve always relied on others to “protect” us from concocted threats, and been prepared to fight to show our loyalty to first Britain, and then to America, at great cost to our own people from both indigenous and settler communities. Showing our loyalty to our allies has caused us to engage in many wars at their behest, and to buy military hardware to suit their needs, not ours. For example, we have on order 75 F35 jet fighters, with long range capacity and in-flight re-fuelling – only needed if we’re intending to bomb faraway places & people. The price just keeps going up, and the planes themselves have a blighted development history, with many shortcomings evident. We should cancel those for starters, as the Canadian government is considering doing. Then there are the twelve submarines on order from France at a cost (currently) of \$100 million – they will be obsolete before they hit the water. Why are we buying so many, such expensive ticket items? Only to suit the inter-operability requirements of the U.S. military, when building short-range patrol boats would be much more suitable to protect our immediate borders. We are so fortunate being an island nation, which affords us natural security. Even during WW2 when the Japanese had designs on invading Australia, when Darwin & Broome were

bombed, and two mini-submarines even got into Sydney harbour, they pretty quickly figured out that the land was so hostile that their forces would die of thirst in the deserts & the invasion plans were scrapped. Currently, Australia allows US Marines to be stationed in Darwin on a rotational basis, despite Covid 19 running rampant in the U.S. military, and there are no plans to excuse Australia from RIMPAC war rehearsals in the Pacific, due to begin in late July. The Australian government has made no secret of the fact that it wants to be among the top ten arms exporters in the world. So, a great deal of the Research and Development budget goes into military adventurism. Prime Minister Morrison recently beefed up the need for “security” in the Pacific/Indian Ocean areas, seemingly oblivious to the fact that our best protection is to be good neighbours, good trading partners with all the countries in our region, and to the fact that we should not even be thinking about having to make a choice between the U.S. and China. Getting mainstream media to even be interested in these topics is difficult, because the alliance with the United States, which former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser described as dangerous not long before he died, is such a sacred cow in this country. But there are hopeful signs, like a major report being prepared by SIPRI entitled Environment of Peace, to be ready in 2022, and the United Nations Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, with just twelve more countries requiring ratification in their home Parliaments, for it to become actionable under international law. Unfortunately, the Australian Government is unwilling on this matter – it will require a change of Government before Australia can ratify that treaty.

6. Break-out rooms: what are my deepest concerns about militarisation? How important is COVID 19 to my thinking? What can I do to encourage sanity on this issue? What can AYM do? Report back in twenty minutes, with suggestions to share.....appoint a spokesperson please.
7. Plenary, to hear from group spokespersons. Also indicate if you'd like a follow-up email, listing suggestions and references.
8. Thanks, and close with silence.

